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## A Reader's Response

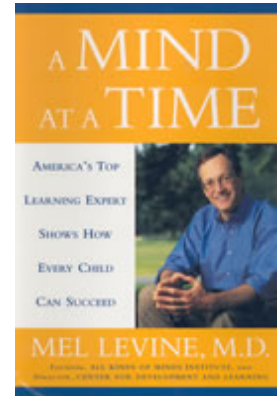
**Levine, M. (2002). *A Mind at a Time*  
USA: Simon & Schuster**

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The mind is a remarkable instrument that contains mysteries we are still trying to understand; however, current research does explain how significantly different our minds are from one another. These differences lead to critical variations in learning strengths and weaknesses from child to child. It is unfortunate how greatly misunderstood children can be within home and school environments, even though this body of knowledge is available to us.

I have several years of teaching experience at a combination of elementary, high school and postsecondary levels. In the past my attempts to create entertaining and enlightening lessons were not as well informed as they could have been. My approaches to instructing students were based on my personal learning style. I could have been significantly more effective had I known something about neurodevelopmental systems and learning profiles. I assumed that if students were looking at me and smiling, they were actually listening and learning; I was misinformed and unaware of my teaching errors.

*A Mind at a Time* provides information that parents and teachers can use to become more effective in their daily interactions with children. As Dr. Levine writes, "In the course of describing the struggles of unsuccessful children...this book provide(s) a road map for parents and teachers, enabling them to observe...

I recently completed a psycho-educational assessment for a grade twelve student. He is struggling with depression, social anxieties, and other behavioral problems that started to surface in grade six. Our assessment of this student uncovered severe cognitive processing problems with his attention control system, motor system and memory system. It was also determined that this student is very bright. He has a verbal IQ of 126 and a nonverbal or visual intelligence IQ of 130. However, even though he is very intelligent, he struggles because various neurodevelopmental systems cause him significant difficulty

the unfolding of important mind functions that play a leading role in school performance (and in career success). As such, this book can assist the work of parents and educators committed to the earliest possible detection of breakdowns in learning as well as the prompt identification of a child's assets"(pg.15).

I left teaching to start my own educational diagnostic company. I have now conducted hundreds of psycho-educational and cognitive assessments to determine whether learning disabilities and/or attention problems are interfering with the school performance of those who seek our help. As a result, I have come across many kinds of minds and have seen remarkable variations in how individuals attend to information, process information, memorize information, and express their knowledge.

with printing, note-taking, written expression, attention to task, organization and memory. In elementary school he was labeled as lazy and unmotivated. It was recommended that he try harder and show more effort at school. No one understood why he struggled, nor appreciated that his being exceptionally bright contributed to his emotional sensitivity to criticism. In a week he will meet with me to discuss his learning profile and consequent school struggles. He will begin to understand how to control his learning environment by using accommodations such as computers, note-takers, and extended time on exams to achieve success in school. He will understand how the gifted personality (a perfectionist, highly sensitive to criticism, moody, and stubborn) can be defeating when faced with learning challenges. Dr. Levine writes, "When people, adults and children, learn about their own gaps, they frequently show, or actually report, a sense of relief, because for the first time in their lives they are able to understand exactly why they've been struggling to meet certain demands and how they can go about conquering or bypassing these challenges"(p.26).

These experiences, coupled with my own significant personal learning challenges due to dyslexia, shaped my openness to Dr. Mel Levine's work. My reading of his first book, *Educational Care*, helped me realize just how often children are misunderstood, at school, by their teachers, and at home by their parents. Dr. Levine's published works have contributed to course material I use as an instructor. It has become my mission to teach parents, school administrators and teachers about neurodevelopmental issues and learning differences.

*A Mind at a Time* focuses on eight cluster areas of neurodevelopment.

- Our Attention Control System
- Our Memory System
- Our Language System
- Our Spatial System
- Sequential Ordering System
- Our Motor System
- Our Higher Thinking System
- Our Social Thinking System

Each of these systems is critical for learning; strengths and weaknesses in each can produce various learning styles. As well, weaknesses in any of these systems can result in a child's chronic misunderstanding of material being taught or significant frustrations in expressing knowledge learned. By having a solid understanding of these systems, parents and teachers can be effective at determining the best instructional methods and learning strategies for their child.

Dr. Levine brings a liberating message of hope to parents, teachers and children; it is an especially important message for those who are not blessed with learning profiles that mesh with the demands of school. "Not only do different profiles have their day in the limelight eventually, but also children are capable of changing their strengths and weaknesses over time. Take heart, parents: neurodevelopmental profiles are not like computer hardware or fossils. They are resilient....parents and teachers have to be on a constant, diligent quest for buried treasure within children" (pp. 37, 38).

### **About the Responding Author**

**Howard Eaton** earned his B.A. in Psychology at UBC and his M.Ed. in Special Education at Boston University. He was a public school teacher prior to starting the Eaton Coull Learning Group based out of Vancouver, B.C.

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